

(Washington, DC) Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) made the following statement in response to President Obama's call to repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell during his State of the Union address:

"I am pleased that President Obama has called for the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell this year, but his words have left me with more questions than answers. We have heard his promises to repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell reiterated time and again, but not exactly *when* or *how* he plans to achieve this.

"Over the course of the past year, I have urged President Obama on multiple occasions to address this important national security issue once and for all.

"Last June, I sent President Obama a letter along with 76 fellow Members of Congress asking him to help us put an end to further Don't Ask, Don't Tell discharges.

"In July, I offered an amendment to the Defense Appropriations Act that would have prohibited the use of funds to carry out key provisions in Don't Ask, Don't Tell. I ultimately withdrew my amendment due to pressure from the White House and some of my colleagues in House leadership.

"Having received no response to my first letter, I sent a second letter to President Obama in August exhorting his administration to make Don't Ask, Don't Tell a priority and to do everything in its power to bring about repeal.

"It is important to note that time is of the essence. As 30,000 more troops prepare to deploy to Afghanistan in the coming months, the Senate Armed Services Committee and House Military Personnel Subcommittee intend to hold hearings on Don't Ask, Don't Tell that will determine the pace of repeal efforts. Furthermore, there are currently no plans to include active-duty service members, gay or straight, in either discussion regarding repeal implementation.

"We have two historic opportunities to bring us closer to final repeal than ever before. That is why I introduced H.R. 4180, the Honest and Open Testimony Act, in December. My bill helps provide for an honest and open discussion regarding Don't Ask, Don't Tell repeal by allowing active-duty members of the Armed Forces, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) members, to openly testify in Congressional hearings and share their ideas concerning implementation without fear of retribution.

"Unless we resolve to back up our words with actions, the over 65,000 GLBT service members currently on active-duty will have to stay in the closet this year. The Obama administration must work with the Department of Defense, the U.S. military, and Congress to ensure the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell in 2010."

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings is Vice Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, a senior member of the House Rules Committee, and Co-Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

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